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28 November 1966

Dr. M. H. F. Wilkins
MRC Biophysics Laboratory
King's College
26-29 Drury Lane
London, W. C. 2, England

Dear Maurice,

I have meant to write you for some weeks but I have been overwhelmed with academic matters and I have had little time to devote to the various problems arising from the objections of you and Francis to the publication of my book. Also, I wanted to show the manuscript to more people to get their reactions, both to the general principle of publishing this sort of book and to the correctness of its various passages.

Now, I still believe strongly that publication now will do far more good than harm. Certainly I don't think it shall affect adversely the role science plays in our society. Everyone knows that scientists are human, and the DNA story shows no one up as unscrupulous or evil. Moreover, I don't feel that it overemphasizes the role of personality in scientific discovery. The amount of competition, anxiety, etc., shown by us in the '51-53 DNA work was not out of order for work on an important subject.

In addition, there is a terrible lack of knowledge in young people's minds of what doing science is like. A lot of unnecessary, cruel awaking may not occur among young potential scientists if they have an opportunity to read a book like mine before they enter a lab. All too often they discover that their supervisors are more concerned about how to beat their competitors than with the work, often to the point of hopeless paranoia. On the other hand, you and I both know all too well that a scientific career should not be entered into if one is searching for an unblemished world. The real reason for a young person to go into science is because he is intensely curious about natural phenomena, not a desire to escape from the limitations of the human character.

Now to go on to the details in the book. Of course, I wish to get all the facts which I report correct. But even more important I do not

I do not wish by omission of facts, easily added, to give a badly one sided story. It was basically for this reason that I have tried to show the manuscript to everyone concerned. Even so I realize that naturally I emphasize my thoughts and not those of you and Francis. So in the next few weeks, I shall have another go at revision, hoping for substantial improvement. In addition I shall add an epilogue which puts Rosalind's first class mind into better perspective by pointing out how well she did with the TMV problem.

Then I'll send it to you, hoping that you will look at it and conceivably want to suggest further changes. I will not ask for a release and so you will be free to object as you may wish. But I think a nasty open battle (in the press or elsewhere) will do all of us much harm and it would be far better for you to suggest changes which insure that your side of the story is presented.

Thus I hope very much that you shall consent to look at my forthcoming revision.

With best regards,

J.

J. D. Watson

cc: T. J. Wilson - Harvard University Press
J. C. Kendrew

P.S. Prior to learning of your objections, I, at the suggestion of Harvard University Press, had agreed to let Weidenfeld handle publication in England. They had hoped to publish in England in late March or April but I have written them that I am in the process of making further revisions and now hope to send them something final around the first of the year.